

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 14609 230250Z

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ACTION EB-06

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SUBJECT: PAA AND TWA HIT BY STRIKE

REF: (A) ROME A-637 OF OCTOBER 7, 1974; (B) ROME 13549

1. SUMMARY: PAA/TWA OPERATIONS IN ROME HAVE BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY LABOR AGITATION AT DOWNTOWN TICKET OFFICES AND ROME/FUNICINO CHECK-IN COUNTERS SINCE OCT 17. STRIKERS TACTICS AT AIRPORT ARE TO DISRUPT OPERATIONS DURING PEAK PERIODS, WHICH HAS CAUSED SOME LOSS OF PASSENGERS TO ALITALIA. POLICE AND (AT TIMES) MILITARY BEING USED TO KEEP MINIMUM SPACE OPEN AT CHECK-IN COUNTERS, BUT NOT WITHOUT AT LEAST ONE INCIDENT BETWEEN STRIKERS AND POLICE. USE OF SECURITY PERSONNEL IN THIS MANNER OBVIOUSLY MEANS FEWER PERSONNEL AVAILABLE FOR OTHER SECURITY DUTIES AT AIRPORT.
END SUMMARY.

2. PAA/TWA OPERATIONS IN ROME (ALSO TWA IN MILAN) HAVE BEEN DISRUPTED BY STRIKERS AT DOWNTOWN TICKET OFFICES AND ROME/FUIMICINO AIRPORT CHECK-IN COUNTERS SINCE OCT 17. LATEST ACTION TRIGGERED BY PAA NOTICE TO 30 EMPLOYEES TERMINATING EMPLOYMENT (REF B) AND TWA INTENTION TO TERMINATE BASING OF CABIN PERSONNEL IN ROME (REF A). PAA AND TWA EMPLOYEES HAVE JOINED FORCES IN STRIKE TO PROTEST THESE REDUCTIONS IN FORCE.
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PAGE 02 ROME 14609 230250Z

3. STRIKERS ARE PICKETING TICKET OFFICES AND ATTEMPTING TO DISRUPT OPERATIONS AT FIUMICINO AIRPORT. POLICE KEPT EXTREMELY NOISY STRIKERS BACK FROM COUNTERS AT FIUMICINO THROUGH SATURDAY. ON SUNDAY STRIKERS PARTIALLY BLOCKED CHECK-IN COUNTERS BY LYING DOWN IN FRONT OF THEM; THEY WERE NOT RPT NOT REMOVED BY POLICE AS SMALL FORCE ON HAND OBVIOUSLY INADEQUATE TO COPE WITH UP TO 200 DEMONSTRATORS. ON MONDAY POLICE AND TROOPS KEPT ABOUT 200 CHANTING, CURSING, WHISTLE-BLOWING PAA/ TWA STRIKERS (AUGMENTED BY PROFESSIONAL STRIKERS, ACCORDING TO LOCAL AIRLINE REPS) BACK A MINIMUM DISTANCE FROM COUNTERS. TWO STRIKERS ARRESTED AFTER SHOUTING VERBAL ABUSE AT POLICE AND TUSSLING WITH THEM. PHOTOGRAPHERS WERE CONVENIENTLY ON HAND -- AS WAS ALSO THE CASE ON SUNDAY BUT NO POLICE INTERVENTION OCCURED -- TO RECORD THE INCIDENT.

4. AFTER ARRESTS , WILDCAT GENERAL STRIKE DEVELOPED FROM 1130 TO 1430 AT FIUMICINO MOST CHECK-IN OPERATORS (INCLUDING ALITALIA), ASA GROUND SERVICES PERSONNEL AND CATERING STAFF WALKED OFF IN SUPPORT OF PAA/TWA PERSONNEL. MANY FLIGHTS DELAYED.

5. COMMENT: TO DATE BOTH PAA AND TWA HAVE MANAGED TO OPERATE FULL FLIGHT SCHEDULE, MUCH TO DISMAY OF STRIKERS. BOTH US CARRIERS, HOWEVER, HAVE HAD TO SHIFT PASSENGERS TO ALITALIA ON OCCASION BECAUSE OF DISRUPTION AT CHECK-IN COUNTER. AT TIMES STRIKERS HAVE HASSLED PASSENGERS IN ADDITION TO NOISE-MAKING TACTICS. STRIKERS STRATEGY IS TO HIT PRIMARILY AT PEAK PERIODS, RATHER THAN CONTINUAL PICKETING/DEMONSTRATIONS.

6. USE OF STANDBY TROOPS AND EXTRA POLICE IN CHECK-IN AREA MEANS THEY ARE NOT AVAILABLE IMMEDIATELY FOR DUTY ELSEWHERE AT FIUMICINO SHOULD NEED ARISE. THIS ASPECT OF SITUATION PRESENTLY OF MORE CONCERN TO EMBASSY THAN ADVERSE EFFECT OF EXTREME TACTICS USED BY STRIKERS.

7. SITUATION AT FIUMICINO AIRPORT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY GET WORSE BEFORE IT IMPROVES. OCTOBER 22 PRESS CARRIES REPORTS OF IMPENDING EXTENSIVE ALITALIA LAY-OFFS, WHICH WILL PROBABLY TRIGGER ACTION AGAINST THEM AS WELL. CURRENT STRIKES HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED AND LED BY RANK AND FILE UNION MEMBERS, WITH UNION LEADERSHIP ABOVE SHOP STEWARD LEVEL UNABLE (AT LEAST TO DATE) TO PLAY AN EFFECTIVE ROLE. VOLPE
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